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ABSTRACT

A Title III, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, open concept school program has been serving the Ojibway Indian Community for 4 years and has recently been evaluated. Derived from a project evaluation submitted August 19, 1974, this informal report presents comparative data on the open concept and traditional school. Using a "frequency observed" parameter, evaluators compared the experimental school with a traditional school from the same district via site observations. Transition from elementary to junior high school was evaluated via data relative to daily absenteeisms, discipline referrals, and academic failure in math, English, social studies, and sciences for grades 7 and 8. Parental attitudes were evaluated via 30 completed questionnaires (over 100 were solicited). Student attitudes were measured by a 25 item questionnaire wherein response was made via a picture of a "smiling", neutral, or negative face. Teacher attitudes were measured by a written questionnaire concerned with implementation procedures (lesson plans, classroom rules, discipline, work assignments, etc.) The evaluator's summation stated that "In general, the open concept program has exhibited success in meeting its objectives; its major weakness involves the language arts and reading components of the program, as well as staff communication". (JC)

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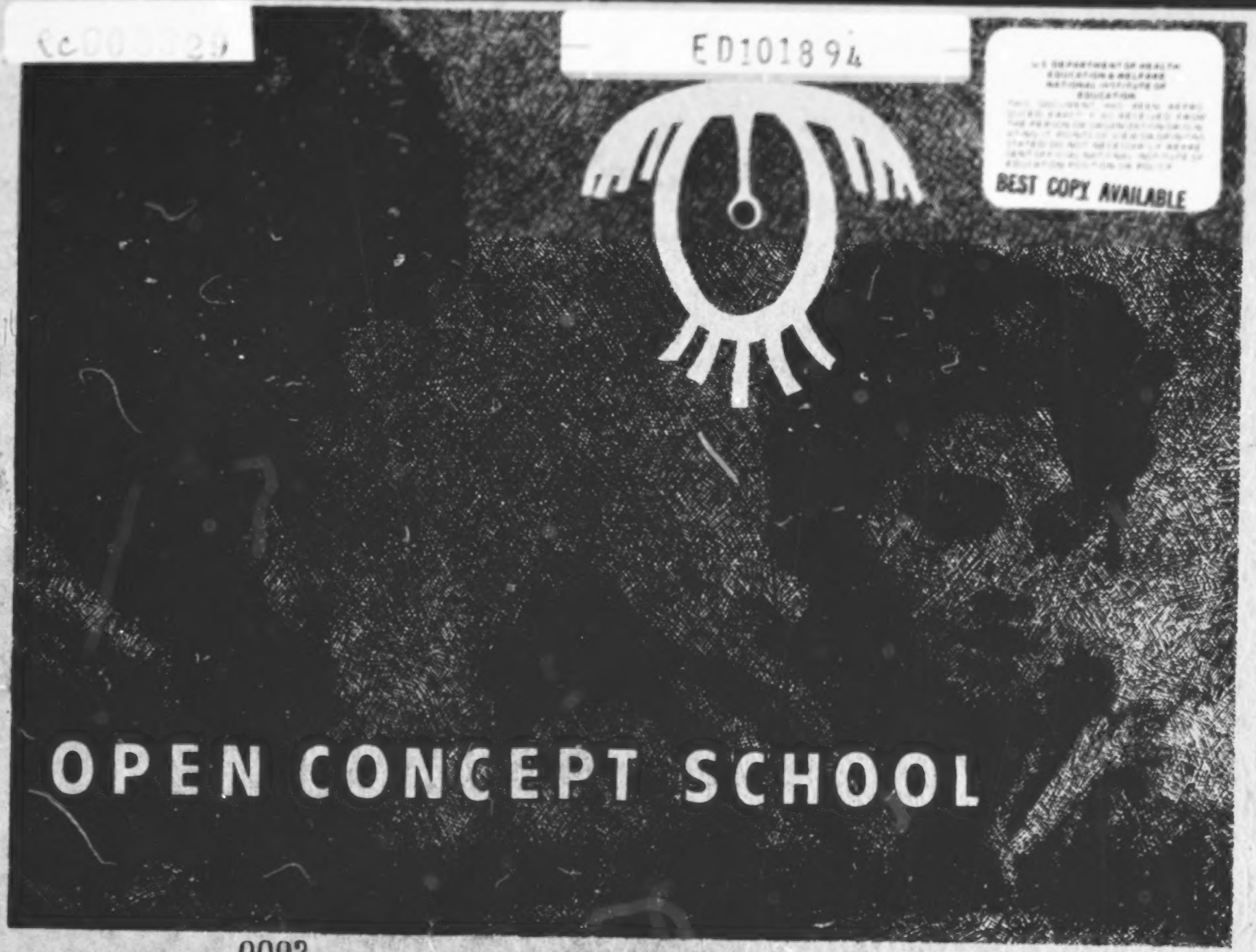

THE ORIGINAL BANDS OF
SAULT STE. MARIE
CHIPPEWA INDIANS

206 GREENOUGH ST.
SAULT SAINTE MARIE,
MICHIGAN 49783

Dear Reader:

It is with great interest that the Ojibwa Indian community of Sault Ste. Marie is looking at the Open Concept for Indian Education Program located at the Pinlayson School.

To the end that it will provide our young people with the survival skills they will need in their tomorrow - we will look upon it with favor. The Ojibwas survived in Bahweting long before the first white man arrived.

Open education is not new. Our ancestors learned their lessons on survival in the open under the sky. Their tools were those of the forest, the water, the earth and its game. Their teachers were their elders, wise to the ways of survival. The lore of their forefathers was passed down to them around the fires and in the chants and dances by which they communed with each other and with the Great Spirit, Manabusho.

We want an Open Concept Program that teaches us our cultural heritage and also teaches the skills we need for us to survive in the world in which we live today. We need the communication skills that will enable us to communicate to the rest of the world the Indian way. In so doing we will contribute to the well-being of other human beings on mother earth.

If the teachings of our cultural heritage can assist all mankind to survive it will certainly create an empathy between all beings of the universe. We seek this through education and the reader should know that we are bringing resources now available to us as Indians to mutual endeavors in education. If these resources can promote the success of learning programs such as the Open Concept Program at the Pinlayson School, we are happy.

Sincerely,

Joseph K. Lumsden
Indian Education Facilitator

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The illustrations in this booklet are taken from plates of Ojibway Indian pictographs which were found in a rare set of volumes presently on file in the library of the Bureau of Ethnological studies, Washington D. C. The meaning of the pictographs will be found in quotations on the pages in which they appear. It is significant that the idiom in which communications appear in any culture can be meaningful to any other culture if the desire to search for equivalents is based on an appreciation of the uniqueness of all the tribes of mankind.

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JOHANN P. INGOLD, Business Manager

Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools
408 East Spruce Street
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783
PHONE 906-635-1531

WILLIAM A. POPPINK
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 18, 1974

To Readers Interested in the Open-Concept Program:

I have observed the open-concept school for Indian education at the Finlayson School for four years. The program has helped to develop individual attitudes and an individualized program of skills for the students in that building. It is difficult to measure exactly the gains that have been made. One can easily state that the program has been a success but there have been problems. My observation has been that the positive results of the open-concept program have been not only for the students but for the parents and the community in which the school is located. School-home relationships have been improved so there is a mutual trust and a common ground on which to discuss school problems. This is evidenced through parent-teacher contacts, parent advisory councils and through visitations to the school.

Test results show that students who started in this school in kindergarten or in the pre-school program have done exceedingly well. Students who have left the Finlayson School have adapted well to the Junior High School program and have not had any special difficulties.

Teachers in this program work exceedingly hard, are innovative, are challenged and live with their students in a very open manner. This type of teaching takes dedication, perseverance and constant in-service training. Teachers in this program volunteered to be part of the open-concept philosophy and this is a most important factor in any such program. Excellent in-service time and training has been one of the most important segments of the Finlayson program.

We welcome visitors to our school to see this program in action.

Yours sincerely,

William A. Poppink

William A. Poppink
Superintendent of Schools

DR. GEORGE W. MULLIN, Treasurer
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WILLIAM A. POPPINK
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 18, 1974

Dear Interested Reader:

In the words and phrases that punctuate talk about the crises facing the American Indian in the United States, one seems to find all roads return to education.

There have been a few critics who maintain the schools are doomed to failure in meeting the needs of the Indian child. We prefer to embrace an affirmative faith in our students to grow through educational programs designed to meet their needs and help them prepare to fulfill their aspirations. Thus, our efforts and tasks have resulted in the state validated ESEA Title III program entitled "Open-Concept School for Indian Education."

Yes, there are problems in building a more appropriate educational program for the Native American; but there is progress, too.

We are proud to be able to say ". . . but we are doing something about it." The pages of this book will give the reader an overview of a specially designed program for the Native American grade schoolers financed in partnership with federal educational dollars through the auspices of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

We believe this program is worthwhile, and too good to be left unknown to the public. The public must know that there is at work in the schools a viable, action alternative to the picture of American Indian despair painted by a few critics. If nothing else, this program is a statement of possibilities for the future and even greater action.

Steven R. Malmberg

Steven R. Malmberg
Curriculum Coordinator

OPEN CONCEPT PERSONNEL AND MANY HELPERS

Robert C. Beecroft ..... Principal
Nick J. Oshelski ..... Coordinator
Steve Malmberg ..... Director
Rose Ann Groleau ..... Pre-School
Phyllis Sims ..... Kindergarten
Loma Poppink ..... Primary
Joyce Milligan ..... Primary
Marg Huff ..... Intermediate
Jeanette Hillock ..... Intermediate
Jim Baron ..... Junior
Dan Schmeltzer ..... Junior
Rick Duffett ..... Phy Ed.
Mike Drumheller ..... Music
Sue Beedy ..... Art
Ruth Mattson ..... Motor Skills
Linda Browning ..... Aide
Julia Ball ..... Reading
Ruth Wallace ..... Reading
Linda Paquette ..... Aide
Aileen Schaller ..... Aide
Ann Wallace ..... Aide
Debbie Brown ..... Math
Phyllis Paradiso ..... Aide
Cora Gravelle ..... Title IV Aide
Sally MacArthur ..... Title IV Aide
Cindy McCoy ..... Title IV Aide
Lanette Stapleton ..... Library Aide
Carolyn Hudson ..... Aide
Gail Pavlot ..... Aide

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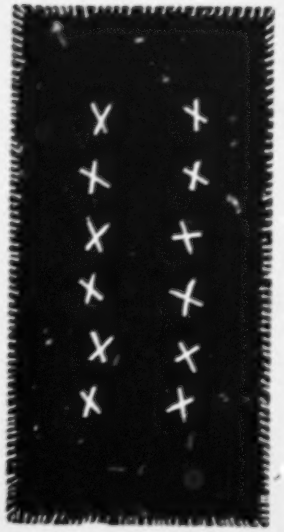

Persons (the crosses) present in the lodge

Blanche Belanger ..... Home-School Coordinator
Peggy Clement ..... Home-School Visitors
Roberta Goetz ..... Home-School Visitors
Brian Case ..... L. S. S. C. Work Study Aide
Cheri Dorsey ..... High School Student Aide
Margaret McGill ..... High School Student Aide
Wanda Alford ..... School Nurse
Alda Routhier ..... School Nurse
Jeanne Schmeltzer ..... Speech Therapist
Kathy Rose ..... Learning Disability
Grace MacArthur ..... Secretary
Fran Jacobson ..... Secretary
Harold Finner ..... Custodian
Lois Malette ..... Cook

William A. Poppink ..... Superintendent
Johann F. Incold ..... Business Manager
Warren Andrews ..... Director of Personnel
Steven R. Malmberg ... Director of Compensatory Education
Dr. Henry Prince ..... Consultant/Evaluator
Donald Beaton ..... State Consultant
Robert Amundsen ..... State Consultant

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Dr. George Mullin — Mrs. Verna Lawrence — Dr. James Pierce
Mrs. June Shaw, President

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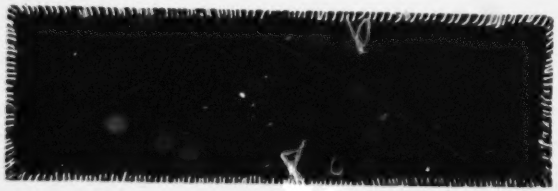
Before getting into the story of the open education program currently under way at the Finlayson Elementary School in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, it should be recognized that the mind of the reader may well be made up in advance as to what it is all about. Further, reader attitudes may range all the way from "very much in favor of" to "much opposed to" this and other alternate education programs for boys and girls.

Open education is, along with "open space," "open campus," "individualization," and "work study programs," related directly to a new approach to learners with needs not being met by the traditional educational programs which have become institutionalized during the past fifty years.

The simplest way of looking at all these forms of alternate programs, including open education in elementary schools, is to bear in mind that it is an attempt to move away from a 30 students to one teacher ratio in the classroom to somewhere near the one-to-one learning situation. We know that this ultimate goal will never be reached for financial reasons. We can, however, demonstrate that the ten-to-one (more or less) ratio goes a long way to increase the amount of understanding the child will acquire if other conditions are also taken into account.



The other conditions, which are no less important, include a philosophy which accepts the notion that children are capable of selecting what they want to learn. Further, that they will want to have a voice in determining what the learning schedule will be and how fast they feel they can proceed with the learning task once they have made the choice.

Open education programs, as viewed by some who are convinced that learning is dependent upon absolute silence and attention which the teacher requires in order to conduct the lesson in a somewhat authoritarian manner, are likely to appear chaotic. Since most adults are the products of this approach to learning (and this includes a vast majority of professional teachers) it is a little demoralizing to discover that this approach is no longer considered the essence of a good learning situation in an open concept classroom. Rather, the child works in the midst of movement, discussion, visible sights and sounds without looking upon them as being distracting from the task at hand.

In contrast to the traditional classroom, the relationship of the learner to his peers is considered as an aid to learning rather than as evidence that the student is cheating by getting help from his friends with the problems of interest to them both. Cooperation - not competition - in the mastery of academic learning is the mode.

The central focus of the pages to follow will be comments and ideas of teaching personnel actually operating the open concept program mentioned above. First, it is important to provide the reader with the proper background of the program in terms of funding, physical setting, and the population being served. All three elements play an important role in making the program what it is.

Still further, open education programs look with favor upon learners working together either in small groups or with friends. The teacher's role in this scheme of things is that of a facilitator and programmer of resources and materials as well as serving as a motivating agent to get the learner involved with the media available. Ideally, the objectives of the learning event are selected by the child with the help of the teacher who keeps the records of achievement as a basic part of each child's demonstrated growth. The degree of encouragement and guidance which the teacher must give is obviously dependent upon a great many factors relating to the individual learner in terms of his total life experience.

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"I am floating down the river smoothly"

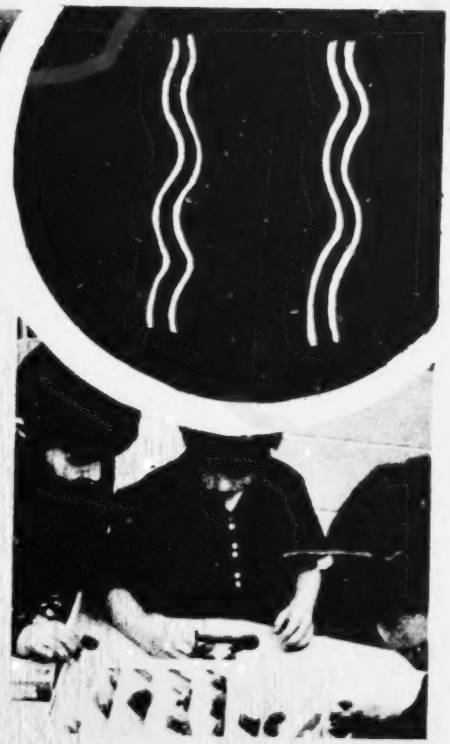
It should be recognized at this point that this is the fourth year for an open concept program in Sault Ste. Marie. This year it is operating under different auspices than it did in the initial program which began four years ago. An excellent presentation of last year's program was published under the direction of Johann Ingold, who at that time was Director of Compensatory Programs for the Sault Area Schools. The reader is well advised to digest the information contained in that booklet before proceding with what is presented here as the program goes into its fourth year.

The program being in mid stream as it were is to suggest that we are beginning to receive hard data as to its success. The project evaluation report submitted by Dr. Henry Prince of HPH Associates (evaluation consultants), dated August 19th, 1974 presents some of the needed feedback data. Mr. Nick Oshelski, Project Coordinator, who maintains his administrative quarters at the Finlayson School site, has drawn together contributions and observations of the professional staff currently working the open concept program. Much additional information can be gleaned from the pictorials and diagrammatic tables presented in the latter part of the booklet.

The purpose of this two-fold approach is to provide the reader with as much positive information as possible for schools and/or individual teachers who may be thinking about initiating similar programs in their own districts either on a whole school or an individual classroom basis.

While the Open Concept School for Indian Education is a school-wide program involving an entire building, it can be successfully conducted on a much smaller scale such as a single floor or an individual teacher's classroom. In any program, it is obvious that the necessary advance planning as well as financial and psychological support from the administration is essential.

Along with the above kinds of assistance, mention should be made of need for solid community support from parents of the children involved in the open concept program. It would be foolhardy to attempt to force parental acceptance of this approach by assuming that once it is under way there will be no criticism. It is too late to either save or alter the program once the conventional wisdom of the community group involved is convinced that "their children are not getting a proper education" using the open concept approach.



Further on, we shall present feedback from many of the elements of the present program from which the reader can determine where the pitfalls may lie if similar programs are planned or attempted.

The scope of the evaluative data collected by the professional evaluators was wide as it was various. Teachers in the program were observed, on-site observations were made, a parent questionnaire was prepared and tabulated, as was a similar one for the staff. A follow-up study of the previous year's students now in Junior High was conducted. The achievement data of the open concept students was processed and summarized. To ascertain the degree of diffusion of knowledge about open concept education in the local and regional areas was prepared and tabulated with some revealing results.

Finally, all of the various evaluation instruments were presented in a formal report along with some recommendations and conclusions which should be very helpful to the program's future. Remembering that it is presently in midstream, so to speak, it is important that adjustments in the nature and direction of open concept programs be made if the boys and girls being served are to have eventual success in their academic and social lives.

HISTORY OF THE FINLAYSON SCHOOL BUILDING

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Finlayson School first opened its doors, for the students, in September, 1962. The school was constructed, mainly with federal funds, to reduce the overcrowded conditions which existed at Lincoln and Jefferson Schools. The building contains 14,400 square feet and has a capacity to house 210 students. At the time of construction, the building was most adequate for the present needs for student services. But as the various programs increased, space became most limited.

The school was named in honor of a long time community leader, Mr. Donald M. Finlayson. Mr. Finlayson had been associated with community services for 57 years, including serving on the Board of Education for 19 years.

At the beginning of the 1971-72 school year, Finlayson introduced a new innovative educational idea - the "open-concept" approach. Originally it was planned to utilize the hallways as an extension of the classroom, but the fire marshall put a damper to this idea. The halls were not wide enough to set up learning stations and still allow adequate room for traffic. Therefore, the open-concept approach had to be conducted within the confines of the classroom. To assist in some way, a relocatable classroom was purchased, to serve as a library or multi-media center. The lack of proper space for learning stations still exists. Yet, the staff has been most instrumental in coming up with spacing arrangements to induce interesting learning environment.

"I go through the Medicine Lodge."

One item that was eliminated when constructing this school, was the creation of a shower system, allowing students to keep clean after sporting events or if they just "needed a bath."

The majority of the Finlayson community area lacks proper sanitary conditions. There are no sewer lines, or large enough water lines to service the area. Recently, the City Commission, League of Women Voters, and the Mar-Shunk Parent Committee has obtained an Urban Renewal Grant to establish the much needed water and sewage to be installed.

Time does march on. Change does transpire. With community improvement, parent cooperation, and school progress, a new atmosphere develops. It takes many different individuals and agencies to create a new environment. With everyone pulling together, a new feeling of interaction comes to being for an improved social and academic life.

Robert Beecroft
Principal

ON SITE EVALUATIONS ARE BASIC

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"During the course of the year the evaluator visited the experimental school at least once a month (and usually more often) to observe the learning activities, meet with the staff, and collect data as it become available. Interim reports of visits were furnished periodically to the staff for consideration.

The first report focused on two curricular areas: career education and language arts. Posters and bulletin board promoting career education activities were clearly visible in the early portion of the school year, and they continued to be visible and updated throughout the remainder of the year. The increased attention to career awareness is in part due to the Career Education Workshop that the experimental teachers attended in August, 1973. The staff cleverly linked these activities with social studies activities emphasizing Indian heritage at the beginning of the year, and this linkage, which not as successful later in the year, was attempted at various times.

The language arts area's utilization of standard workbooks (or dittoed facsimiles) created some problems, for the less motivated children occasionally copied notebook pages rather than attempted to understand concepts and develop skills. This problem endured in varying degrees throughout the year. The key difficulty in the language arts area seemed to be the generation of maximum language arts development with a minimum of forced motivation. The staff worked to solve this problem throughout the year but they were not totally successful.

The second report indicated that the approach utilized at the beginning of the year - diagnosis and prescription for cognitive learning deficiences - had waned somewhat in frequency. Some staff members continued to utilize this approach with varying degrees of success, while others were either unsuccessful or so disappointed with the success rate achieved that they apparently abandoned it.

"Yes, I see there is plenty of it."

Small-group work by children and teacher-directed small-group lessons were not as effective as they could have been. In-service time should be devoted to this area.

The language arts segment of the curriculum continued to be a trouble spot which needs to be remedied. Interest in language arts activities seemed low at this time.

Opportunities for above average growth by above average students seemed enormous; however, problems continued for the less motivated students and those students of below average skill at the upper elementary level.

The third report focused on items of concern mentioned above, as well as the need for modification of learning center activities to attract less motivated students. Serious consideration of learning center modification seemed imperative.

A review of staff minutes for 1973-74 indicates that the evaluator's periodic reports were generally discussed at staff meetings. Occasionally, some suggestions led to immediate change in aspect of the program. However, some important segments of the reports were either not discussed or were apparently considered superficially. The prime focus of staff meetings in the future should be individual student difficulties and program adjustments for improved student learning."

(From comments in the evaluator's report)

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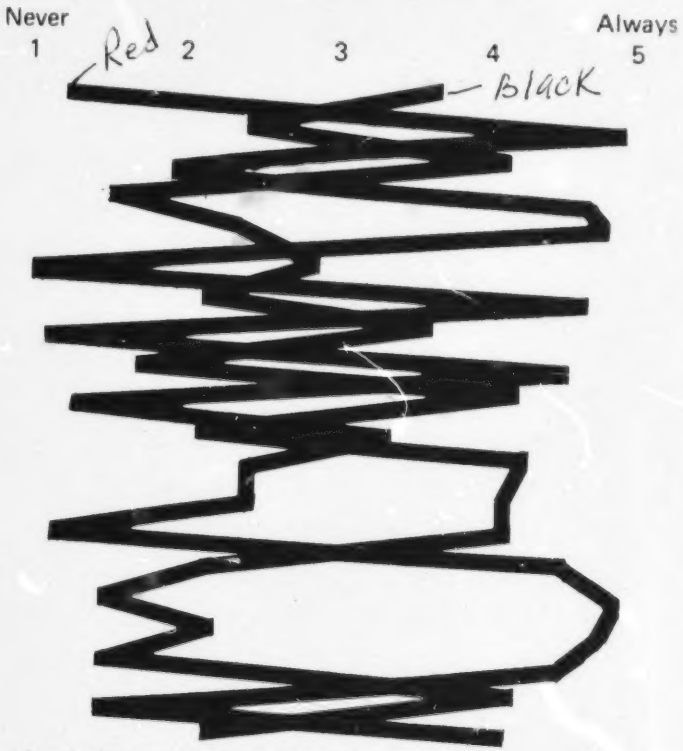
THE OPEN AND A TRADITIONAL SCHOOL COMPARED

"Hear me, thou who art talking to me."

The evaluators used a "frequency observed" parameter to compare the open concept school with a traditional school in our school district. To record the frequency of an observed activity they used a scale of 1 to 5. A "1" was recorded if it was never observed. A "5" was recorded if it was always observed. Variations of frequency between these two extremes were also recorded to assist in developing a mean. The table below presents the results.

Activity or situation observed	Never 1	2	3	4	Always 5
Each child has same text and materials					
Many different things going on simultaneously					
Children do their own work without help from other children					
Children, with teacher's help, determine their own routine					
Children work individually and in small groups at various activities					
Children are not supposed to move about the room without permission					
Teacher uses much time in individualized observing and questioning					
Teacher prefers that children not talk while they are working					
Children voluntarily group and regroup themselves					
Teacher plans and schedules children's activities for entire day					
Teacher groups children for lesson directed at specific needs					
Children expect teacher to correct all of their work					
The work children do is divided into subject matter areas					
The teacher's lessons and assignments are given to the entire class					
Children spontaneously look at and discuss each other's work					
Instruction is based on each child and his interaction with it					
Children work directly with available manipulative materials					
Children may voluntarily use other areas of building during the day					
All children are kept in sight to see they do what they are assigned					
Children help one another					



Legend: Open concept observations are shown in red. Traditional school observations are in black.

Observer – evaluator comments:

The open concept classroom school of 16 teachers and a control group of 18 teachers from a traditional school were visited for one hour each by two trained observers. A checklist of twenty items were selected from a much longer one developed by Walberg and Thomas. The tabulation method based on frequency observed as explained above was implemented.

The findings as shown above indicate that the two groups differed significantly in the areas of teacher interaction with students, student grouping for classroom assignments, visual awareness of student activity by the teacher, and student modification of learning groups.

The two schools were most similar in the frequency of subject matter division of learning and in the frequency of grouping for specific needs.

POST OPEN CONCEPT SCHOOLING

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A most obvious question must be raised as to the fate of children who start out in an open concept school at the elementary level and then transfer to a traditional program at Junior High. First, it must be remembered that a given group entering the seventh of eighth grade will not have been oriented to open concept education to the same degree that the lower elementary children will have been once they arrive at the Junior High age. Even the lower elementary children are being over-shadowed by those students who will have had a pre-school experience as their starting point of formal schooling.

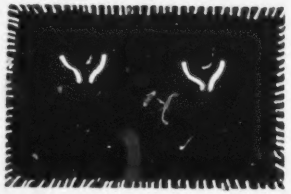
Hence, we have children with wide variance in educational history arriving at the door of the Junior High which also has a decidedly different philosophy of education that that of open concept programs.

If this were the sole basis for variability we could make predictions with greater safety. Unfortunately, it is not. The individual differences of intelligence, social adjustment, economic and environmental support, not to mention physical differences arising out of nutritional patterns as well as personality factors relating to attitudes towards schooling in general, must not be over-looked.

Evaluations of the degree of success or failure of children who are going through their first serious transitional period in formal schooling patterns must be highly speculatory.

Still, there are some elements and indicators that can be mentioned; having been forwarned about drawing conclusions. The statistics relating to absenteeism, discipline referrals, and academic failures are presented in the opposite column.

"I am being called to go there."



	Grade Seven (semester)		Grade Eight (semester)	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Daily Absentee Rate	6%	16%	8%	19%

Note: The second semester figures for both 7th and 8th grade are high due to four students who were absent 48% of the time at the seventh grade level and 34% at the eighth grade level.

Discipline Rate	14% for the year	22% for the year

Note: This is based on one or more referrals to the principal.

Academic Failure Rate				
Math	16%	4%	5%	6%
English	33%	5%	24%	14%
Social Studies	26%	24%	6%	19%
Science	13%	4%	32%	25%

It can be seen that the open concept students, once they adjusted to Junior High, reduced their failures in three of the four subjects to a significant degree at the seventh grade level. Eighth graders did not. The low math failure in both grades may be a function of the improved math program at the Finlayson open concept school. Language arts, science, and social studies need greater emphasis at the elementary level in order to improve the chance of academic success in the Junior High.

To add to the tenuousness of drawing final conclusions, it must be mentioned that the students from the Finlayson had to suffer the handicap of walking to school from greater differences, being penalized by weather conditions preventing channel crossing of the St.Mary's river for those students living on Sugar Island, and other mitigating circumstances not found among other students who live much closer to the Junior High building.

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PARENTS RESPOND TO OPEN CONCEPT SCHOOLING

Realizing that educational innovation of any kind whatsoever is slow in gaining popularity with the parents of the children involved if such changes differ too greatly from their own schooling experience, it is still very important that the opinions of parents be taken into account if the program is to endure. It is also a tendency of questionnaires to suffer from the law of diminished returns if the same population being questioned about essentially the same concerns suffer from a rendundancy of such requests. There are a goodly number of nonobtrusive measures which serve as indicators of a program's acceptance and which do not lend themselves to statistical techniques. Since such measures are highly subjective, even if reassuring, the table shown here has taken the statistical approach as a safer technique.

The parents from over 100 families were asked to respond in writing to the series of questions here and to indicate with "Yes", "No", and "Not sure" their opinions. The comments of the parents as they qualified their answers to individual questions are not available for assessment.

In contrast to the first year's questionnaire in which 67 parents responded, this year's survey obtained only 30 replies. Still, it is important to the proper assessment of the open concept program that such replies as there were be presented.

"Hear me, you, to whom I am talking."

	Replies in Percentages			
	Yes	No	Not Sure	No Answer
Does your child seem satisfied with school this year?	93	7	0	0
Is your child doing better in school this year?	67	3	20	10
Do you know your child's teacher better this year?	83	3	3	10
Do you like the open-concept program for your child?	60	10	27	3
Does your child tell you about what he or she does in the program?	100	0	0	0
Is your child more interested in school this year?	77	7	3	13
Do your friends and neighbors know what the open-concept program is?	57	10	33	0
Do you feel that your child is learning more this year compared to other years?	70	10	17	3
Have you attended a school council, PTA, or advisory council meeting this year?	47	50	0	3
Have your feelings toward the open-concept program changed this year?	33	47	10	0
Do you like the program more this year than last year?	60	13	17	10
Have you been at a parent conference with your child's teacher this year?	100	0	0	0
Does your child like school more this year than last year?	70	13	23	10
Do you think the open-concept program is better for your child than the regular program?	57	20	23	0

PUPIL GAINS BETWEEN PRE AND POST TESTS

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"See what I have."

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST RESULTS – (Gains between pre and post tests)

LEGEND: "OPEN" = Open concept students. (Experimental group). "TRAD" = traditional school (control)
"LESS", "MORE" = Significant difference in gains. "SAME" = No significant difference in gains.

GRADE LEVELS	2		3		4		5		6	
LEARNING CATEGORIES Groups	OPEN	TRAD	OPEN	TRAD	OPEN	TRAD	OPEN	TRAD	OPEN	TRAD
Paragraph meaning	LESS	MORE	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME
Word meaning	LESS	MORE	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME
Vocabulary	SAME	SAME	–	–	SAME	SAME	–	–	–	–
Spelling	SAME	SAME	MORE	LESS	SAME	SAME	LESS	MORE	SAME	SAME
Word study skills	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	MORE	LESS
Language	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME
Arithmetic computation	SAME	SAME	MORE	LESS	LESS	MORE	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME
Arithmetic concepts	–	–	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME
Social Studies	–	–	–	–	–	–	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME
Science	–	–	SAME	SAME	SAME	SAME	MORE	LESS	SAME	SAME

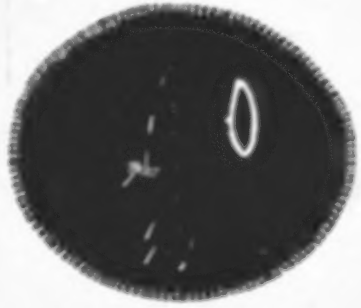
The academic gains of the open concept students have been recorded by means of a number of instruments in common use in most schools. Further, in order to provide a viable basis for comparison, a control school of a traditional type from within the same school district was selected and paired with the Finlayson School.

Additionally, it was deemed important that tests of academic standing prior to involvement as well as tests after a given sequence of instruction was completed should be administered to provide meaningful data for the evaluators.

The battery of tests which were administered in keeping with the above included the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test, the Purdue Perceptual Motor Survey, the Stanford Achievement Test, and the Michigan Assessment Test.

Persons wishing to review the results of these tests should request a copy of the 1973-74 Evaluation Report from the Superintendent's office.

In the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test, the experiment group of open concept students differed significantly with the control group at only the third grade level. In scholastic aptitude, open concept students are served as effectively as are the conventional school pupils. There is little significant difference between the two groups in the pyscho-motor tests, most likely due to the less than suitable processing of the two groups in terms of comparable numbers and grade levels.



AFFECTIVE MEASURES RELATING TO AN OPEN CONCEPT SCHOOL

Attitudes of children towards their school experience are difficult to assess or quantify sufficiently to draw reliable conclusions about any school program in any locality. Inferences are usually made by looking at the absenteeism, vandalism, and the degree of happiness in the students as these can be determined by questioning them directly.

This particular elementary school has a very low level of vandalism if all of the elementary schools in the district are used for comparison purposes. This is not a true story, however. The fact that the Finlayson School is in an isolated district with relatively little "passing through" traffic either on foot or on wheels, the lack of proximity of the building to spontaneous or unpremeditated acts of violence puts it in a relatively safe location.

More important than figures on vandalism is the fact that there is much adult-family use of this particular building because of its location in the center of the Indian community of Sault Ste. Marie. It is safe to surmise that when the total family has a stake in the opportunities to use a school building more or less on their own terms, they tend to pass on to their children a respect for the property with which they strongly identified. In short, it is a community school as defined by the parental group rather than one that might be designated by the school district which manages its program.

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"I have the medicine in my heart."

Absenteeism, another common measure of pupil attitude about schooling, is equally suspect in the case of the Finlayson School. There is little competition of equally attractive alternatives between home and school in the district. The Finlayson School is, by and large, a fun place in which to spend the day. Further, the walking students are more likely to be victims of the late fall and early spring weather which entails travel to school without benefit of sidewalks or parents delivering them in cars. As was referred to earlier, an additional complication of a bus delivery system for distant Sugar Island students is contingent upon the ice and wind conditions of the St. Mary's River which has been further complicated by attempts to keep the channel open well through the winter. All of the above elements mitigate against the Finlayson School every being able to maintain an extremely high attendance record.

Perhaps the best available measure relating to the affective area in the open concept school is the Smiling Face Test which was administered to 134 students in the school. This test required the students to indicate positive, negative, or neutral judgments about a series of questions which relate to their school experience. The results of this test which appear on the next page will provide some rather interesting answers.

SMILING FACES AND THE OPEN CONCEPT SCHOOL

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"My friends."

The 134 students checked the appropriate face to tell us how they felt about the various aspects of their school experience. The ten faces represent the percentages.

1. Coming to this school .....
2. What you do at this school .....
3. Eating breakfast at this school ....
4. Myself as a student .....
5. My supportive room teacher ....
6. My other teachers .....
7. My friends at school .....
8. Science at school .....
9. Reading at school .....
10. 10. Math at school .....
11. The "lab" .....
12. Social studies .....
13. Language .....
14. Physical education .....
15. Music .....
16. Art .....
17. Movies .....
18. Getting to choose what I do .....
19. Kids who break rules .....
20. How much I have learned this year .
21. Being at this school next year .
22. Myself last year .....
23. Myself this year .....
24. Moving around a lot .....
25. Career education .....

POSITIVE NEUTRAL NEGATIVE

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EVALUATOR'S SUMMARY

"* The staff has developed alternate staffing practices.

* The staff has developed flexible student management practices.

* The staff has introduced early childhood education for preschoolers.

* The staff has provided individualized instruction through laboratory settings.

* The staff has established learning centers in Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science. The Math and Science centers seem to be very effective, in view of cognitive test gains in these areas. The other centers are ineffective in their present arrangement.

* The staff has increased parental understanding of educational objectives and procedures to the desired level.

* Students did not improve their knowledge, comprehension, and application in language arts by 0.75 grade level equivalent during the school year.

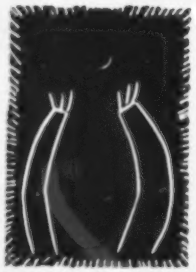
* Students did increase their knowledge, comprehension, and application of basic mathematical concepts by 0.75 grade level equivalent during the school year.

* Students did develop proficiency in gross muscle control and dexterity to a level consistent with chronological age. First grade pupils did not reach the specified level, but neither did the control pupils.

* Students seem to value the ability to make simple decisions. However, additional data to support this view must be gathered."

0032

"I am gathering medicine to make me live."



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

"The open-concept program should focus its attention on the following items:

* Development of an effective language arts approach for the experimental pupils which will include appropriate small-group methods.

* Refocusing staff meetings to deal with student learning problems and learning center improvement throughout the year.

* Improvement of communication patterns among staff members, and between staff and administrative members.

* Review of an open-concept philosophy, so that all staff members may be aware of the types of structure that are appropriate and the types of activities that are most conducive to effective learning.

* Means of promoting increased parental understanding of the program.

* Effective behavior modification techniques for "open school" application.

* Benchmark assessment processes that are effective and efficient.

* Modification of learning centers to make them more attractive.

* Increased concern for improvement of pupil self-concept.

"In general, the open-concept program has exhibited success in meeting its objectives; its major weakness involves the language arts and reading components of the program, as well as staff communication. Since over 40% of the staff was new last year and many new staff members are likely for 1974-75, staff communication seems imperative to integrate these newcomers and to insure positive morale."

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PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS INVOLVED IN OPEN CONCEPT TEACHING

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Accepting the reality of the lag between theory and practice in any endeavor, we can expect that open concept programs will be no exception to the rule. In fact, several forces have been at work in which the program has been kept in a state of flux. This has not been necessarily all bad. We have mentioned previously the degree of staff turnover. The evaluators have pointed to some of the adjustments and improvements which should be implemented to keep the goal of the program on target. The greatest need-true in this case as it is in any group effort - is that of better communication between the various members of the working group, either hired or volunteers.

Granting that the interaction of individuals was optimum, there would still be personality factors of the individuals involved that woud have to be considered, Staff attitudes, relating not only to the purposes of the program but towards children and life itself as such, might have become stabilized long before the onset of the open concept program and which would surely play a significant role in determining the personal interpretation they would place on the task to which they have been assigned.

"Women holding a medicine bag."

Since the nuances of individual personalities, as such, do play a large part in daily acts of service, they are difficult to assess and interpret by mere observation. It is important to the credibility of this report that the reader hear from the teachers themselves as they present their personal views about what they are doing.

The comments which appear in the following pages are replies to a request for statements from the staff. Mr. Oshelski, coordinator, requested that they respond in writing to a series of important areas of concern that relate to the major elements peculiar to open concept education programs. These areas appear on each pages of comments with the teacher's responses immediately following. It is interesting to know that there were twenty-four pages of typewritten comments with all but one staff member responding to the total questionnaire in depth. The limitations of space and the need to avoid duplication of similar comments made it necessary to edit the material submitted.

It is hoped that what is presented here will provide the reader with sufficient information to draw reasonable conclusions as to the contribution of the teachers to the success of the open concept program at the School.

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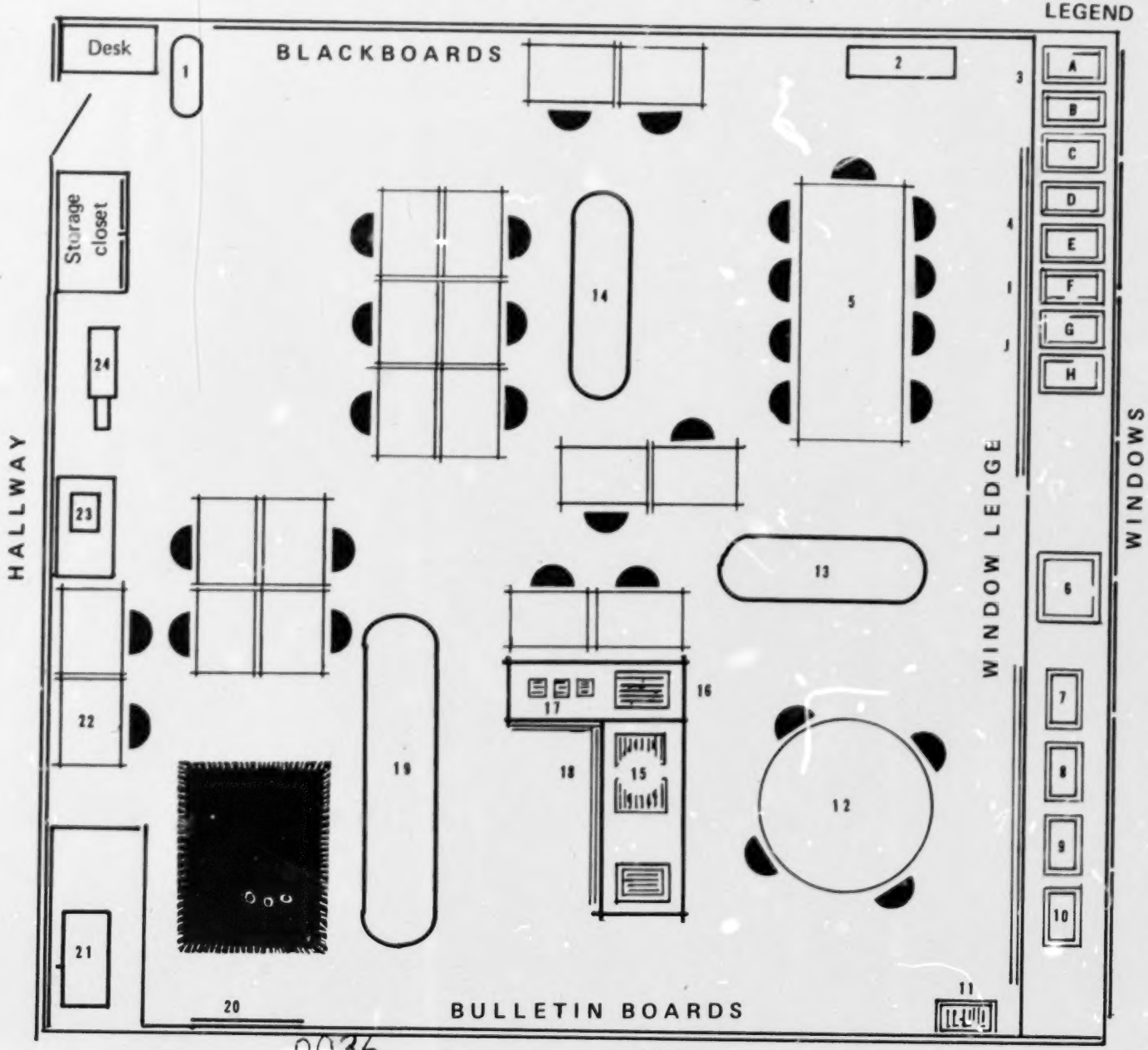
A TEACHER DESIGNED OPEN CLASSROOM LAYOUT

PUPIL STATIONS

"I am going to the medicine lodge."



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"Indian drum beaters."

SCHEDULING

(Mr. A) "Particularly effective is the use of a schedule to develop in children a continuous use of time - upon completion of the schedule the teacher corrects the contracts and signs that the child satisfactorily completed the assignment in her area. At the end of the day, a final compilation is made on a weekly check list. If the teacher sees a student avoiding a learning area he may list this area on the student's schedule as being the first for that student on the following day."

WORK ASSIGNMENTS

(Ms. B) "By testing and observation, the teacher writes a prescription for the child. The prescription may concern one area or several. When the contract time has expired the teacher will check the child's understanding of the concept."

(Mr. E) "Work assignments are good if the teacher follows through on the assignments and makes sure everything is completed."

RECORD KEEPING

(Mr. E) "Scheduling is a big part of record keeping. It has to be done every day. At the end of each day I transfer the schedules to monthly forms. In a Math Lab a child has a folder. The student starts off with a pre-test to see which area or level the child needs help with. Then using the Continental Press Math kit the student goes step by step to reach his or her achievements of that area or level."

(Ms. F) "Should be kept to a minimum. Therefore demanding that you select the most useful and comprehensive. Skill booklet, if set up properly can be the most useful, other than skills booklet, conference notes from meeting with child - if this is possible is the next most helpful."

LESSON PLANS

(Mr. A) "Lesson plans are formulated around the theme for the month. For example, Anthropology - Archeology, Indian designs, etc. Small group plans may be emphasized on picture Graph skills - Countries and Cultures and large group projects such as early man - Fossils - Wax Maps, etc."

(Ms. D) "For particular materials to be assigned the teacher usually has this this in an obvious place for anyone to locate. If a teacher is aware that she will not be present, she generally has a very complete outline of what can be done and the materials to be used. She also leaves names of other teachers in the building who can be of help."

RULES IN THE CLASSROOM – TYPES OF PUNISHMENT

(Ms. B) "The main rule - You must not interfere with another person's learning - if it happens: (a) removal of child from the situation (b) isolation from the group until he decides he can cooperate, (c) taking away of special privileges.)"

(Mr. E) "There are no written rules in the classroom. The students know what is expected of them and up to now there is not need for written rules. As for punishment staying after school is the main one and mostly used to finish scheduling."

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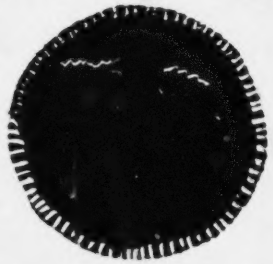
DESCRIBE YOUR DAY

(Ms. C) "I start with a controlled group which has been set up over a family group plan. In other words, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade teachers pool their classes and each took 1/3 of the 1st, 1/3 of the 2nd, and 1/3 of the 3rd. This erases grade barriers. . . . After 45 minutes of roll call, announcements, discussion and some Math, the students go their way and I'm available for the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders who need help in Spelling, Phonics, Language- writing or Reading Comprehension. At 11:15 we go to lunch. At 12:00 we have support groups again for reading periods that last until 1:30. Then open rooms until school dismisses."



IF YOU HAD TO START OVER
WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

(Ms. B) "Figure out some way to get rid of the hall! Lose contact with kids in the hall."

(Ms. F) "Some teachers feel they would open more slowly. Perhaps, in some school it would work but I often wonder if they would go all the way to an open environment. They may become too settled in perhaps a departmental more scheduled system."

(Ms. C) "Not much."

(Ms. D) "Possibly I would have made a gradual change from open classroom to open school. This would have given the children an orientation period of openness within a self-contained classroom where the teacher oversee their activities. In this way, they might have been able to handle the open school in a more constructive way. This is especially true for the very little ones."

"Now hear me.

CONTROL OF CHILDREN IN THE ROOM

(Ms. C) "Have interesting learning stations is the best. But there are always a few individuals who make life miserable for others, so a teacher must check each room frequently."

(Mr. A) "1. Isolation 2. Hand on shoulder or head 3. Quiet reprimand 4. Quick "mean" glance 5. Raise voice 6. Holding hand, arm around shoulders."

(Ms. B) "You got it! A dirty look goes a long way! Also, if the teacher's interest is on the situation, so is the children's. Sometimes a yell helps - as D . . . . B . . . . calls it, "The Open Concept Yell."

COOPERATION FROM ADMINISTRATION

(Ms. D) "Generally quite good. There are times I feel the administration should attend staff meetings to discuss problems and successes of programs and listen to input from staff members. The administration should help solve problems."

ROVING TEACHER ROLES

(Ms. B) "Very well! They like our program. They run their classes in the same manner. They help on units, contribute to our meetings for planning, give us ideas, and come to our school functions and help us with programs.

(Ms. C) "In my opinion the situation here works well with roving teachers. An art teacher doesn't need to design her projects to exactly 45 minutes. A gym teacher can limit or increase the numbers at will or use all girls one day and a mixed group another. Musical students can get extra time in class, etc."

MORE TEACHER COMMENTS

"Let us talk to one another."

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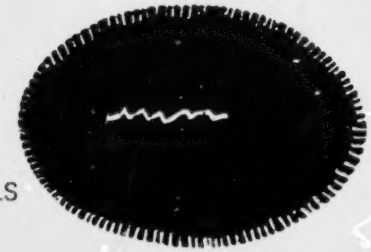

PROBLEMS YOU HAVE FOUND WITH THE PROGRAM

(Mr. A) "A. Lack of communication B. Coordination of scheduling C. Hallways D. Lack of time to meet needs of my own particular learning area.

(Ms. C) "Constantly being interrupted. Lack of establishment of effective disciplinary action."

(Ms. D) "The little ones sometimes get "lost" in the maze of openness in which they are to be involved. With the many interruptions experienced, it is sometimes difficult to attend to things that are necessary. With an open school, a teacher nas a difficult time trying to conduct a structured class, when there is no one else in the room to help those children coming in for help or work to fulfill schedules or prescriptions."

(Ms. F) "Some children are in need of more structure than can be workable with all rooms open. I am in favor of one closed room perhaps with only the morning closed. There are some children with learning problems who cannot handle such a large and social environment. It is too much to ask of a teacher to handle an open and closed classroom situation at the same time."

USE OF AIDES

(Ms. F) "Aides should work with children not merely be clerical workers. Aides are not essential to running an open school, but they can add a lot to the program if available."

NEEDS FOR OPEN SCHOOLS

(Ms. F) "All schools need to be more open, 1. giving the student more responsibility for his behavior and learning 2. staff communication 3. less walls 4. more tape recorders

(Mr. A) "1. More staff meetings 2. More outside professional help - talks, workshops 3. More effective use of aides 4. More central location of Media Center Library."

HOW WOULD YOU UTILIZE THE HALLS IN A CONVENTIONAL BUILDING?

(Ms. B) "An extension of the classroom – giving only a maze of passons for traffic, that way running could never get started."

(Ms. F) "Halls should be an extension of the classroom or a separate classroom in itself. In our school it is futile to discuss the problem because a hall is a hall and cannot be used for anything more."

GROUPING OF CHILDREN

(Ms. D) "The children are grouped by pods in a multi-age level setting: Preschool – 3½ - 5, Primary Pod – 5 - 9, Upper Pod – 9 - 12. This grouping is excellent in that those children who are able to help those who are having problems. The older ones with difficulties are able to help the very young ones and get a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. And yet there are times it seems it would be an asset to have one level for discussion and academic purposes."

IN–SERVICE TRAINING

(Mr. A) "Chance for teachers to plan years flow chart. Discuss changes for the following years program. Catch up on new innovative ideas in open-concept. Beginning arranging of learning centers."

(Ms. C) "Plenty of reading. Should be spaced – better more often and of shorter duration."

(Ms. D) "It is a vital part to any open-concept program. This can be a time when outside professional people can contribute ideas in establishing the program, improving the program or giving insight to those factors necessary for a working program."

FINAL TEACHER COMMENTS

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"Tortoise – a good spirit."

ARE ACADEMICS THE MOST IMPORTANT?

(Mr. A) "No – affective areas of change are. Especially for our children here to be able to cope with the world."

(Ms. C) "We try to teach children self-respect, self-confidence, respect for others, etc. Academics, yes, but right affective first."

(Mr. E) "Each student is different in their ways and needs, and academics are not always the most important."

IS THIS A FREE SCHOOL?

(Ms. B) "No! It is a school of many choices, where the responsibility of learning is placed on the child. The teacher then acts as a facilitator rather than a lecturer."

(Ms. F) "No children do have rules and regulations to live up to."

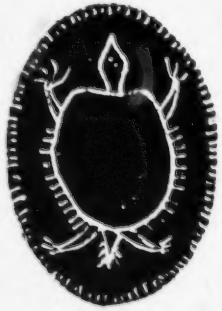
(Mr. A) "No! It is a school where children have some rights to control their educational direction."

HOW SHOULD STAFF BE SELECTED?

(Mr. A) "Handpicked as to special interests and concerns for children. A special understanding for the disadvantaged child. A special consideration for children of Indian ethnic origin. A faculty for continuous innovations and change."

(Ms. B) "Should be voluntary on the part of staff workers, not a situation

0044



INTRA–PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND ANCILLARY PERSONNEL

(Mr. A) "A much closer knit faculty at all levels exists here. "The Finlayson Family" in many respects is reality."

(Ms. C) "The better all these people understand each other the more the children will profit. It is important to know and rise to advantage strengths and weaknesses of each member of the staff. The staff must work with the philosophy of the open school to get the best results."

TEACHER'S PHILOSOPHY

(Ms. B) "Since an open-concept school is a humanistic school, the teacher must be a humanitarian. She must feel the worth of children, their feelings, ideas, and habits are important and a part of their own individual lives. Value clarification has brought about this some what."

(Ms. C) "Each child is as important as every other child and should be treated in the way he will learn best."

(Mr. A) "Teacher should have a phase-in program toward objective of freedom. (Individualization – Continuous progress – team teaching – multiple grouping) non-gradedness. Any of these methods first or a combination, then the final objective of the open classroom, then perhaps, to open school."

(Ms. F) "In an open-concept classroom or school the teacher should not look on her class as one unit to be either controlled or free. She should view her class as individuals, some of which would be able to function in an open environment the first day. Other students you may have to establish yourself with and guide and structure until they can exhibit more responsibility."

0045

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The story of the Open Concept School for Indian Education is in continual need of rewriting. What has been printed here may well be different to a significant degree from what is presently being tried as the leadership maintains an open, self-correcting attitude as to what is needed to make the program meaningful to boys and girls.

Just as those who evaluate the staff in terms of the broad goals of the program attempt to be constructive, the reader likewise must evaluate the substance of what has been presented here. It will, we hope, result in changing some of the preconceptions and biases which will either make or break similar programs which might be attempted elsewhere under similar or different sets of conditions.

Perhaps the most significant revelation to emerge from the serious study of open concept educational programs will be the realization that we cannot develop young people with self-respect, with self-initiating skills in learning, and with the autonomy of curriculum choices in only the first eight years of their formal schooling. To do so would be to do them a disservice as they migrate upwards to a teacher-directed, authoritarian-managed, competitively-oriented approach to learning which requires them to be suddenly tractable, compliant, and subservient.

Educational leadership has yet to take this global view of the learning process. Rather, it struggles with the drop-out problem without seeing the connection between the two. It can be hoped that the awareness of the education connection will be one of the more startling discoveries as we approach the 1980s.

The idiom of the Ojibway language, when such was needed to leave messages for others by means of pictographs, was free of the constraints of linearility that was imposed by the white man's printing press.

Rather is was circular-to-spiral in picture sequence as the scribe moved from one pictograph to the next on either the face of rocky cliffs, skins, or ground surfaces of hard clay or sand. In an effort to illustrate this approach to communication, we have converted the form of the message from a pictograph sequences to the idiom of modern Ojibway language using the semantic equivalents as such were studied and recorded in the now famous Ojibway Indian Dictionary developed by Henry Schoolcraft, a very early pioneer who lived close to the Sault Rapids for many years.

In English, the message on the back cover would read as follows with the beginning of the sentence at the center and spiraling outward.

"I come to change the appearance of the ground; this ground.
I make it look different each season."

It is to be hoped that, in some meaningful way, this might also serve as an apt summnation of all that typifies the open concept of education - to change the appearance of the "ground" for the Ojibway Indian community to the end that they will enjoy being significant "figures" in the life of the community in which they live.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT E. BISHOP JAN. 1975

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KE-NAH QUIT-TO-I-AH-NA

NA-MUAN-DÀH-WEEN AH-KEE-GE NUM-WA-NA GUA KWAIK-TO-I-AH

SHE-BE-GAU-ZE NAUNG GUIT-TO-I-AH

OPEN

CONCEPT

EDUCATION

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